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ABSTRACT

This executive summary of a final report describes activities and accomplishments of Iowa's 3-year program to improve the quality of educational and community-based services for infants, toddlers, children, and youth with deaf-blindness. The project provided technical assistance to schools, area education agencies, and other service providers. It also provided support and training to families of children with deaf-blindness. Primary services provided by the project were early identification and tracking of infants, children, and youth with deaf-blindness; technical assistance to increase the knowledge and skill levels of parents, educators, administrators, and community service providers in the area of deaf-blindness; development of a parent/family network to ensure that families who have children with deaf-blindness received support and information as well as opportunities to link with other families and professionals; personal future planning and training in the development of transition plans for students with deaf-blindness; and the dissemination of information about the project and effective practices to parents, programs, and agencies throughout Iowa. This report describes the project's conceptual framework and justification, goals and objectives, activities and accomplishments, and problems encountered. (CR)

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IOWA DEAF-BLIND PROJECT
(H025A50024)
(10/1/95-9/30/99)

The intent of the Iowa Deaf-Blind was to improve the quality of services provided to infants, toddlers, children, and youth with deaf-blindness through technical assistance, information dissemination, staff development and consultation to schools, area education agencies, and other service providers.

The work of the Iowa Deaf-Blind Project was organized into five components, each representing a major project goal: 1) Identification and tracking of infants, toddlers, children and youth with deaf-blindness – to maintain an Iowa Census of infants, toddlers, children and youth, birth through 21 with both hearing and vision impairments as defined by the federal definition and included in Iowa's **Rules of Special Education** 2) Technical assistance – to increase the knowledge and skill levels of parents, educators, administrators and community service providers in the area of deaf-blindness; 3) Parent/family network – to ensure that families who have children with deaf-blindness receive support and information as well as opportunities to link with other families and professionals; 4) Transition – to provide personal futures planning and training in the development of transition plans for Iowa children and youth with deaf-blindness; 5) Dissemination of information - to provide information about the Project and effective practices to parents, programs, and agencies throughout Iowa.

The outcomes of the Iowa Deaf-Blind Project were to build the capacity of AEA/LEA teams to identify, assess, plan and implement appropriate programs and services for infants, toddlers, children and youth; connect families with resources through the development of a parent support network; transition students from school to community services and build the capacity of local communities to serve young adults; support and promote interagency collaboration and linkages; provide teachers and support service personnel with best practice information and staff development opportunities.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Goals

1. Maintain an identification and tracking system of infants, toddlers, children, and youth who are deaf-blind.

2. Provide technical assistance, information dissemination, and staff development activities for families, educators, and other service providers.

3. Develop a parent/family support network.

4. Assist local transition teams in developing transition plans which lead to appropriate employment and post-secondary options.

Modifications to Goals

In the first six months of the new grant period our Consultant for Deaf-Blindness and our Parent Liaison resigned and moved out of state. These developments created large gaps in our original proposal, causing significant disruptions in service which we did not fully overcome until the middle of 1998. On November 22, 1995, our State Advisory

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Committee met to discuss these developments and make recommendations to revise our plan. They recommended we begin the search for a new consultant as soon as possible. They also recommended we search for a Parent Liaison, and in the interim ask for assistance from our statewide Parent-Educator Connection organization. With all of these occurrences, we had to significantly alter what we said we would do. Since our consultant was the lead evaluator on our statewide assessment team, assessments fell behind and eventually the entire system fell apart. Without our consultant, we had a difficult time providing technical assistance and training activities. The parent/family network was never developed.

CONTEXT

The Iowa Project for Deaf-Blindness is located in the Iowa Department of Education. The Project Director is the Consultant for children with Severe/Profound Disabilities and works .25 FTE on the project. At the beginning of the new project period, there were 62 persons listed on the census. The project was primarily education focused rather than collaboration focused. The project was involved in direct as well as technical assistance service.

GOAL ACCOMPLISHMENT

1. Identification and Tracking

- Census numbers went from 62 to 78 persons
- Two awareness brochures about Project and Census were developed
- Question and answer document developed to accompany census forms
- Yearly awareness presentations made to the:
  - Vision Itinerant Teachers
  - Audiologists
  - Teachers of the Hearing Impaired
  - Early Childhood Special Education Supervisors
  - Part C Regional Coordinators
  - Parent-Educator Connection AEA representatives
  - Iowa School for the Deaf Staff
  - Iowa Department for the Blind staff
- State Advisory Committee met twice a year

2. Technical Assistance

- Without a consultant the project used the outreach services of the Iowa Braille School and Iowa School for the Deaf.
- Employed a consultant on August 1, 1998.
- From September 1998 to September 30, 1999 the consultant conducted the following activities:
  - Consulted with 21 children, families and service providers in the local AEAs (approximately 28% of the students on the registry)
  - Acquired $3500 of new resource materials for the Deaf-Blind Loan Library
  - Participated on the Deaf-Blind Advisory Board

- Created a web page for the Project (class attended and completed in order to have first hand knowledge of web page system)
- Created the Deaf-Blind Loan Library Guide which will be distributed in the fall of 1999
- Spoke to a fourth grade class at College Community Schools about deafblindness in November, 1999
- Participated in SKI*HI training to gain additional knowledge in the field of hearing impairment during the months of November 1998 to January 1999
- Attended NTAC workshop in February 1999 for instruction in grant writing
- Presented material on deafblindness to a graduate class at the University of Iowa in March 1999
- Presented "Art Ideas and Other Gooey Stuff for Blind and Deaf-Blind Students" at the "Special Kids, Special Needs" conference in April, 1999
- Presented "Deaf-blind Infants and Toddlers: An Overview for Professionals" at the 1999 Early childhood Inclusion Institute in June 1999
- Worked collaborative with the Department for the Blind to develop a one page joint referral form during spring/summer 1999
- Attended the Deaf-Blind Seminar at the University of Kansas in July 1999, in order to increase my knowledge of deafblindess
- Attended workshop on "Alternate Assessment and Students Who Are Deaf-Blind" in August 1999, which was provided by NTAC
- Coordinated and implemented a "Tactile Adaptations" workshop for teachers at the Iowa Braille School on September 24, 1999
- Coordinated a workshop on "Non-symbolic Communication Skills" presented on September 30, 1999 by NTAC representatives
- Five persons trained to become INSITE State Trainers. These individuals conducted the following activities:

1995-1999 INSITE Basic Training Course
4-6 days of class – 1-6 assignments

95-96	Trained 22 professionals (6 days of class – 1 assignment)
96-97	Trained 18 professionals (4 days of class – 6 assignments)
97-98	Trained 25 professionals & 2 parents (4 days of class – 6 assignments)
98-99	Trained 18 professionals (4 days of class – 6 assignments)
	purchased INSITE student manuals for course participants
	provided parent scholarships

10/97 Follow-Up workshop for INSITE Participants
15 professionals in attendance
purchased Resource Manuals for workshop participants

Presented/Shared Information on Deaf-blind and/or INSITE Training at the following:

2/97 Parent Educator Conference (10 in attendance)
2/97 Workshop in Fort Dodge (AEA 5) (20 in attendance – mostly early interventionists)
4/97 Low Incidence Conference (30 in attendance)
4/98 Low Incidence Conference (10 in attendance)
5/98 Conference sponsored by the Learning Institute
6/98 North Central Regional Conference of AAHBEI (American Association of Home-Based Early Interventionists) (40 in attendance)
10/98 State Conference for AEYC (Association for the Education of the Young Child) (15 in attendance)

Educational Experiences for Trainer(s):

6/96 INSITE Trainers' Training *and* North Central Regional Conference of AAHBEI (3 trainers attended for varying amounts of time)
7/95 Hilton/Perkins National Deaf/Blind Training Project (topic: communication) (1 trainer attended)
7/96 Hilton/Perkins National Deaf/Blind Training Project (topic: inclusion) (1 trainer attended)
3/98 Lilli Nielsen Conference on Active Learning (3 trainers attended)
7/98 Great Plains National Deafblind Training Project (1 trainer attended)
6/99 Deaf-blind Regional Conference (topic: interpreting) (1 trainer attended)
7/99 Great Plains National Deaf-blind Training Project (1 trainer attended)

- C.O.A.C.H. Training was offered in 1996 and 1998 by Dr. Chigee Cloninger and Virginia Iverson. In 1996, 24 participants were training to become C.O.A.C.H. trainers. In 1998, an additional 23 persons were trained. These individuals, in turn, do all the training on the C.O.A.C.H. model in the state.

3. Parent/Family Network

- Provided stipends for forty families to attend the annual Parent-Educator Connection Conference
- Conducted sessions on Deaf-Blindness at the Parent-Educator Conference
- Parent Liaison a member of State Advisory Committee
- Contacted all families from the census annually to ascertain needs
- Parent Liaison employed July 1, 1999

4. Transition: The product contracted with the University of Iowa Hospital School to conduct Person-Centered Futures Planning awareness and skill-building activities. They conducted "formal inservices on Person-Centered Futures Planning. A total of 29 teams participated in those trainings. The teams that were trained included 380 participants, representing all areas of support for individuals with a disability. In addition, 840 individuals received awareness of Person Centered Futures Planning and capacity building training. Seventeen separate awareness activities were provided in every quadrant of the state to a diverse group of persons. In addition, workshops were provided to specific capacity building partners such as Iowa's Central Points of Coordination, as well as Iowa's Parent Educator Connection Coordinators and staff. Also, this initiative has been recognized as a formal part of the State's Transition Interagency Coordinating Council.

PROBLEMS ENCOUNTERED

The biggest problem was the loss of two key staff members within the first months of the grant period. This occurrence forced the project to collaborate with other agencies in order to accomplish some of our original plan. We asked the outreach departments of the Iowa Braille School and the Iowa School for the Deaf to provide technical assistance upon request. We continued to search for a consultant. Consultant was employed August 1, 1999. The Parent Liaison was replaced by a parent associated with Iowa's Parent-Educator Connection Project. She kept us in contact with families. Our new Parent Liaison started July 1, 1999. Lessons learned were in the areas of collaboration and having contingency plans.